



New type of urban-rural separation among young generation

Li Chunling
Institute of Sociology
Chinese Academy of Social Sciences



Urban-rural Disparity under *Hukou* System

- Socioeconomic disparity between urban and rural residents is one of the most prominent inequalities in China.
- Partly because of long-term implement of *Hukou* system which resulted a obvious separation between urban society and rural society
- There has long been an apparent socioeconomic distinction between urban and rural people.



Changes of *Hukou* System and its influence

- **Loosening *Hukou* System since the beginning of the economic reform:**
 - Free labor migration from rural areas to cities which has brought about a huge rural-urban migration
 - Opportunities of employment, education and social welfare in cities opening gradually to migrants from rural areas
- **What has happened when urban and rural boundary gradually fade?**
- **May today's young people share similar opportunities, no matter they are from urban or rural areas ?**
- **Have urban-rural disparity among young generation been smaller than their parent generation?**
- **Have the urban-rural separation disappeared among young people?**



Young generation: *post-80's* and *post-90's* generations

- *Post-80s:*
 - *228 million*
 - *17% of total population*
- *Post-90s:*
 - *175 million*
 - *13% of total population*
- Young generation:
 - *403 million*
 - *nearly one third of total population*



Only-child Policy and young generation

- Only-child policy began to implement in early 1980s
- However, the policy has been implemented more strictly in cities than rural areas. Rural families usually had more children than one.
- Most of post-80s and post-90s are not from one-child-family. Only 27.5% of young people are only child in their families.

Ratio of only-child among young generation (%)			
	Rural	Urban	Total
Post-80s	10.9	51.5	19.7
Post-90s	27.0	72.2	35.7
Total	18.9	61.0	27.5



Large part of young people from rural families

- Because of “Only-child Policy”, more young people from rural families than urban families:
 - about 76.9% of the post-80s and 69% of the post-90s are from rural families.
 - These ratios are even higher than their parent generation.



Migration into cities

- However, in 2013,
 - more than two third of post-80s and post-90s live in cities.
 - Only 31.3% of young people live in rural area but most of them in industrialized rural areas and work in factories there
 - Only 8.4% working in agriculture
 - Young generation is concentrated in cities, especially large cities



New type of urban-rural separation among young generation

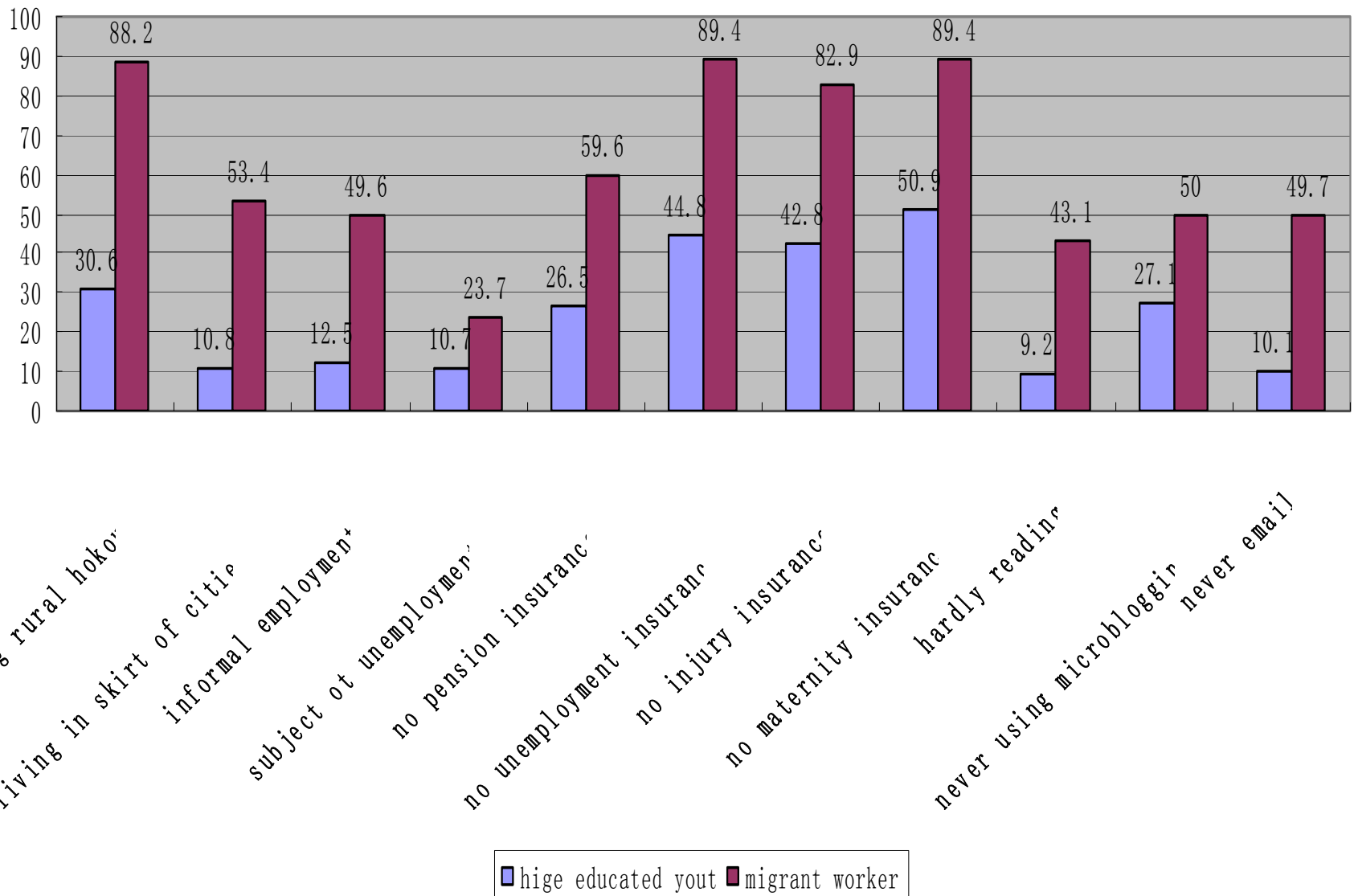
- In pace with the rural-urban migration, urban-rural separation moving into cities
- New type of urban-rural separation splitting young generation into two major groups:
 - Migrant workers (less educated young people from rural families)
 - Young people with high education (college students and graduates)
- By this way, urban-rural disparity transferring from old generation into young generation

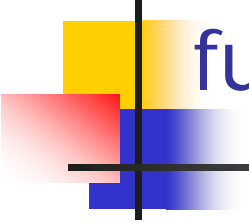


Two major groups of young generation

- Among total number of young generation:
 - About 25%: college students and graduates
 - About 45%: migrant workers
- Among young people living in cities:
 - 42.4%: college students and graduates
 - 44%: migrant workers
- Both groups living in cities but they are in different socioeconomic situation and hold very different social attitudes
- When we talking about how are Chinese youth or what they think and want, we have to clear first which one it is.

socioeconomic distinction between high educated youth
and young migrant workers (%)





Social distinction between two groups: future middle class and new working class

- College students and graduates:
 - *white-collar workers and future members of middle class*
 - *opinion leaders or activists in internet and mass media*
- Migrant workers:
 - *Main part of new working class*
 - *Activists and participants of labor movement*



Chinese Dream and challenges faced by the government

Chinese dream of high educated youth is that they eager to join the ranks of middle class:

- *Decent and stable job with better income*
- *Affording to buy a house and car*
- *Affording to keep a life-style of middle class (leisure time, travel abroad, better education for their children, etc.)*
- *More freedom and democracy in social-political atmosphere*

■ Chinese dream of young migrant workers is to live as city people in cities:

- *Having a job to afford their living in cities*
- *Gaining citizen status and respected by local people*
- *Saving money for running their own business*

■ However, many handicaps clogging their dream:

- *Fierce competition for job*
- *Soaring housing price*
- *Rising living cost in cities*

■ These handicaps have made anxiety among young generation. Internet has becoming a place where they vent their emotions.



“Ants”: underclass with high education

A young group most subject to political extremism and strongly criticize the government in internet.





Summary

- Young generation stratified by *hukou* status and education
- Urban-rural inequality transfer from old generation to young generation
- Urban-rural separation moving into cities with migration of rural youth and creating class differentiation among young people
- New generations of middle class and working class both have strong willingness to participate in public affairs and express their views
- How to meet different needs of two groups, eliminate social separation and reducing economic inequality between two groups are the challenges faced by the government



Thank you!
